

Society Agility Council Zoom Meeting

February 26, 2021, 4:00 pm Eastern

Participating

Unable to Participate

Susan Trolier-McKinstry , Chair	Lincoln Lauhon , Meetings
Shel Baker , Publications	
Babu Chalamala , Topical Staging Task Force	
Julia Phillips , Topical Curation Subcommittee Chair	
Jenny Gerbi , Industry Engagement Council	
Ashley White , Focus on Sustainability	
Pat Hastings , Director of Meetings	
Eileen Kiley , Director of Communications	
Gopal Rao , Chief Editor for Technical Content	
Jonathan Rivnay , Guest	

Action Items

Lincoln and Shel	Develop a straw man for next SAC meeting on partnerships
Pat	Forward details on differentiation developed by Terry Aselage
Jenny and Ashley	Consider whether IEC and FoS should focus on either the Spring or Fall Meeting
Eileen	Send Babu and Susan the notes on Task Force timeline extensions
Babu	Prepare a straw man draft on Task Force timeline extensions for next SAC meeting

SAC Chair Susan Trolier-McKinstry opened the call.

Agenda

1. Introduction of new committee members and new committee structure
2. 2021 Charges/ Feedback from charge discussion
3. Rivnay – experience in planning F20 Covid symposium
4. Staging Task Forces: terms and future planning
5. Differentiation of fall and spring meetings
6. Oversight of international collaborations affecting Meetings and Publications

1. Introduction of new committee members and new committee structure

Strategic and overarching subcommittees which belonged in different parts of the organization are now housed under SAC, which now includes the industry Engagement Council with Jenny Gerbi, Chair; and Focus on Sustainability chaired by Ashley White, the Topical Curation Subcommittee chaired by Julia Phillips, and the Topical Staging Task Force chaired by Babu Chalamala. Finally, there may be a new subcommittee to oversee endorsements and co-sponsorships. The Board sees value in partnering with societies with which there is topical overlap, particularly in areas on the periphery. It is not clear yet which part of MRS will be overseeing these activities; it was the sense of the SAC that volunteers should be engaged in this effort.

2021 Charges/ Feedback from charge discussion

Every operating committee has been charged to:

- Develop a leadership plan

- Be sure to have representative membership
- Implement governance changes
- Assist with diversity and inclusion.

SAC has been given additional charges:

- Support community building within MRS
- Topical curation to make sure that communities aren't dropped
- Consider ways that programs and activities can advance MRS's strategic plan, especially ones that can help better engage members more broadly:

MRS Aspiration: MRS engages members across generations to advance their careers and promote materials research and innovation

Consider ways that your programs and activities can advance the inclusion of all demographics in science as charged in MRS's Diversity Statement

In all activities, seek ways to maintain a high-level of professionalism as reflected in the MRS Code of Conduct

Babu is working on developing new communities: when are groups mature enough to move into the programming cycle? This Task Force will work with HQ to implement an integrated approach to content development that is represented on all MRS platforms.

SAC requested specific guidance on these aims from the Board but has received very little direction. SAC needs to provide feedback to the Board on the most important areas that need to be captured and guidance for the Spring and Fall Meeting Chairs.

The charters are being rewritten for SAC, and the Meetings and Publications Committees; strong coordination will be needed.

The Board wants guidance to emerge from the volunteer structure.

The departure of Meetings Director Pat Hastings in several months will lead to structural changes at HQ.

3. Rivnay – experience in planning F20 Covid symposium

Jonathan Rivnay, chair of the Biostaging Group, was invited to the meeting to report on his experiences in standing up a COVID Symposium for the F20Meeting.

Notes Organizing COVID 19 symposium

- First communication was Late April, Set slate of 4 organizers by August — invited speakers.
- Given the nature of the topic, it was beneficial to bring in non regular members: Kaitlyn Sadtler (NIH), and Liz Wayne (CMU)/Yun Shen(UCR) — all junior PIs. All 3 in non-MSE fields.
- Rivnay believed that organizing this symposium in conjunction with the Biostaging task force was valuable, though possibly not necessary.
- Timeline is short, so expectations need to be clear, (scope, level of free reign, where is the directive coming from and who is “in charge”).

Potential conflicts between meeting chairs (if it's in a S/F meeting) and agility council, if it's coming from there).

- The Covid-19 symposium went very smoothly as a pilot. The hardest part is getting someone to champion the session — Rivnay ended up doing it because he couldn't find someone that both fit the topic and understood putting together an MRS session.

- Having close contact with a staff member, if it's not through staging, is important — Betsy was critical in this regard, both in herding the co-organizers, following up with key players, and connecting with meeting folks, especially given the compressed timeline.
- Biggest suggestion is to somehow accommodate the short timeline. A point I brought up multiple times during the process is that a “typical” symposium has a year and a half to put together an organizing team (typically of people you know or are familiar with) propose a topic, have a list of speakers in mind, and go through the well-oiled MRS process of call for papers, speaker invitation, scheduling, etc. This leaves little room for input and changes. While not looking for “special treatment,” some level of special treatment is needed given these constraints — bounds and accommodations for scheduling, etc, are needed to lock in invited speakers when the fuse is so short, and that was problematic/challenging. (Part of this was because it coincided with the first virtual meeting).

Good things:

Fund raising/funds from MRS — we would not have been able to bring in big name (non MRS typical) speakers without it at such a short time scale. A bit of external funding was useful in paying for the “non MRS” organizers – they really stepped up.

Areas for improvement:

Advertising. Maybe it's the virtual format, but when it's not in the typical process, it may be hard to get visibility. Attendees usually go to sessions they are used to, or that they are speakers in. Maybe more suited for a special virtual session than a virtual meeting. Not sure how different it would be in an in-person meeting.

Earlier coordination with other events/symposia. There was at least one symposium that either wanted to schedule joint sessions, or have input in speakers, but this came very late. Perhaps potential session that have overlap with the special symposium could be targeted as organizers, or such overlaps/connections made earlier.

Babu Chalamala commended the Staging Group for the *Bulletin* Issue, which had to be done in a short time with non-MRS members. There's also a new special issue set for September which came together nicely as a follow-up to the symposium. This was a good example of Meetings-Publications bridge.

4. Staging Task Forces: terms and future planning

MRS policy has the Task Forces set for a two-year cycle; this can be re-upped for a 4-year task force.

Is 4 years enough time to figure out who the right people are and get the program in early enough in Meetings and Publications so that there's traction to keep the community going?

When a new topical area begins in MRS, should MRS allocate a longer timeline for topical staging?

The Staging Group began in 2017 and made good progress in building communities and getting traction.

--Biostaging and Quantum have regular programming. It may be premature to close those committees because they are still building.

--AI is new and trying to find its way; it's not obvious to Babu that there has been time to jell as a group. Finding a good home for AI has been challenging.

--Responsive Materials has the group together, but is still working on defining the scope. More time would be helpful. Once the Task Force is closed, the assumption is that they will be part of the Society.

Is there a time when the Staging Task Force review kills a topic because it's simply not right for MRS?
Are there circumstances where a Task Force should exist beyond 4 years?

Chief Editor for Technical Content Gopal Rao reported AI, Quantum and Bio gave useful feedback to the F22 symposium proposals.

Pat's observations note that the original timeline was 2-4 years. Some take off quicker. She wouldn't want to extend beyond 5 years. If there's no traction by then maybe something different needs to be done. If the group feels it should be pursued but hasn't hit its stride, give it another year.

Jenny agrees that the time frame depends on the topic and what's been going on and how cross-cutting it is. Renewing even for 2 years, if it brings value to MRS and addresses content we don't want to lose, is worthwhile; she'd rather extend it too long than to cut it off without a clear path for integration into society.

Julia noted that this is very qualitative, suggesting that there isn't a reasonably definite description of what constitutes sustaining and so there isn't a basis on which to make a decision. Criteria are needed to establish that this topic meets this bar and should be subsumed into regular programming, or there is no perceived path for this topic to meet this bar. Lacking that, how can a disciplined decision ever be made?

Director of Communications Eileen Kiley recalls having this discussion with Rich Vaia; she'll provide the details for Babu and Susan. Meetings is a faster process. Archival journals can take up to six years. She supports being flexible to that point. Quantum was 2018; Responsive Materials was 2019. Bio and Quantum should be given more time because they were the first.

Ashley pointed out that a lot may depend upon the funding landscaping for the topic. Funding helps get a topic underway more quickly.

An extension of one year can be considered; a draft will be needed with HQ. Babu will come back with a straw man to SAC to formulate the words.

5. Differentiation of fall and spring meetings

The Topical Curation Subcommittee has been doing a fantastic job. They have requested help from SAC on differentiating the Spring and Fall meetings. This subject will be an agenda item for discussion for the next couple of meetings.

Pat will forward where differentiation was left by previous MTGC Chair Terry Aslage as a starting point. Susan asked Jenny and Ashley to think whether they want IEC and FoS to focus on either of the two meetings. Do we want increased emphasis on the topics of industry and sustainability for specific meetings? The goal is to provide feedback to Julia and to MRS on how to differentiate Spring and Fall.

The Topical Curation Subcommittee has looked at programs for F21 and S22. F21 was limited in what the TCSC could accomplish. S22 offered more opportunity to look at it. There were 125 proposals; it's not TCSC's job to assess, but they were pleased with the topical coverage.

When dealing with enduring topics, it's important that the symposia avoid getting so specific that they open up holes within the topic where traditional MRS members don't fit. MRS needs to see whether coverage is broad enough so that, if MRS is their home, they can attend.

MRS symposia have become extremely academic; only one symposium title mentions industry. This is where IEC is extremely important if MRS genuinely intends to capture industry. There's a lot more marketing for the Call for Proposals. That part of the process can be expanded. It may be a good way to capture new communities.

There are some specifics: Good coverage of 2D materials; AI and Machine Learning were flagged; Actinides and Nuclear Materials are in Spring, absent from Fall. This isn't a Topical Staging area, but the interest in nuclear power and national security is a good topic. A proposal on concrete and cement, a former MRS standard, is something Sustainability might want to consider.

Publications Committee Chair Shef Baker commends a very organized approach. If there's a hole, the group does its research to see where the issues are addressed. In communication with other groups with fingers in the Meetings pie, where to go? Susan said that communication should occur thru SAC and through Meetings Committee Chair Lincoln Lauhon.

Babu suggested that Meetings being narrow may be a reflection of MRS losing members and industry members. The program is becoming very focused on very small topics. Susan said that this can change with SAC providing top-down input. This will be a number one an agenda item for the next call.

6. Oversight of international collaborations affecting Meetings and Publications

Lincoln wanted to discuss the governance restructuring. The Board-level committee that looked at external relations was dissolved. No one is looking at international collaborations or even collaborations with other societies that affect MRS Meetings and Publications. Once the cooperative agreement between the societies is signed, all the follow-up goes through the executive director and GovCom and both are busy. Lincoln sees value in having some volunteer input in the process. SAC needs to be thinking about whether to recommend that someone close to the technical front should keep an eye on this.

Pat reported that MRS is reaching out through the Board into a lot of partnerships, especially for S22. Up until now, the partnerships with other international groups have been HQ-driven. Someone else looking at it can make sure that MRS isn't committing in areas where Meetings and Publications are going in opposite directions, or end up with 2 tutorials in the same group.

The Board decision was to engage PACRIM by partnering with societies that already have strength. Which organizations should we continue to partner with? Which ones are the best partners? Someone on the volunteer side may be able to provide input back to HQ on the successes or failure of these.

Susan would like Lincoln to put together a straw man on this, with Shef participating in drafting the straw man. **Shef and Lincoln can bring the straw man back to the next meeting.**